

Nigeria

Nigeria,

<<ny JIHR ee ah>>, a nation on the west coast of Africa, has more people than any other country in Africa. Nigeria ranks as one of the most populous countries in the world.

Nigeria is a land of great variety. It has hot, rainy swamplands; dry, sandy areas; grassy plains; and tropical forests. High plateaus and rocky mountains rise in various parts of the country. The population of Nigeria consists of more than 250

ethnic

(cultural) groups. About half of the country's people live in rural areas. Nigeria also has several large, crowded cities.

Lagos

is the chief commercial center.

Abuja

is the capital of the country.

Most Nigerians earn their livelihood by farming, fishing, or herding. The country is a leading producer of cacao, peanuts, and other crops. In addition, Nigeria has mineral resources, including large deposits of petroleum. Since the late 1960's, profits from Nigeria's oil industry have brought new wealth to the nation. Nigeria has used this wealth to develop new industry, improve its educational system, and modernize its agriculture.

A number of ancient kingdoms developed in the area that is now Nigeria hundreds of years ago. Some of the kingdoms became important cultural and trade centers. The United Kingdom gained control of Nigeria in the late 1800's and the early 1900's. Nigeria was a British colony and protectorate until 1960, when it gained independence.

Government

Military leaders controlled Nigeria's government from 1966 to 1979 and from 1983 to 1999. Civilian rule was restored in 1999, and a new constitution was adopted.

National government. A president heads the government of Nigeria. The president is elected by the people to a four-year term and cannot serve more than two terms. A vice president and Cabinet assist the president in handling the day-to-day operations of the government. The people elect the vice president. The president appoints members of the Cabinet with the approval of the Senate.



The National Assembly is Nigeria's legislature. The Assembly consists of the House of Representatives and the Senate. Representatives and senators are elected by the people to four-year terms. All Nigerian citizens who are 18 years of age or older may vote.

Local government. Nigeria is divided into 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory of Abuja. Each state is governed by a House of Assembly and a governor. Assembly members and the governor are elected by the people to four-year terms. Nigeria's 36 states are divided into over 770 local government areas. Elected local government councils administer these areas.

Courts. The Supreme Court is the highest court in Nigeria. The country's judicial system also includes federal courts of appeal, the Federal High Court, and state high courts.

Nigeria has a number of religious courts. These courts have traditionally ruled only on questions of Islamic personal law for people who are practicing Muslims. The highest such court is the Shari`ah (also spelled Shari`a) Court of Appeal in Abuja. In the early 2000's, a number of largely Muslim northern states adopted Shari`ah, which is the body of Islamic law, as the basis of their legal codes. As a result, Shari`ah is now applied to both civil and criminal cases in those states.

Armed forces. Nigeria has an army, a small navy and air force, and a federal police force. All military service is voluntary.

People

Ancestry. Almost all Nigerians are black Africans. The country has more than 250 ethnic groups. These groups differ from one another in language and in some of their customs and traditions. The three largest ethnic groups are, in order of size, the Hausa, the Yoruba, and the Igbo (also spelled Ibo). These three ethnic groups account for about three-fifths of the total population of Nigeria.

The Hausa people live primarily in northern Nigeria and in the neighboring countries of Niger and Chad. Most of them are farmers, and many also are craftworkers and traders. The Hausa have lived in the area for more than a thousand years. During the 1200's, the Fulani, a people who originally came from what are now Senegal and Gambia, began to settle in the Hausa territory. The Fulani took control of the region during the early 1800's. The two peoples intermixed so much that the group is sometimes called the Hausa-Fulani.

The Yoruba live mainly in the southwestern part of the country and in Benin and Togo, two nations that lie to the west of Nigeria. Many of the Yoruba live in cities and farm the land in the surrounding countryside. Several Yoruba cities, including Lagos, were founded hundreds of years ago.

The Igbo form a majority of the population in southeastern Nigeria. In addition, a large number of Igbo live in other areas of the country. During the period of British rule in the 1900's, many Igbo accepted Western education and ways of life more quickly than the other Nigerian ethnic groups. The Igbo were also more willing to travel. As a result, the Igbo held



many important positions in business and government during the period of colonial rule.

Other leading ethnic groups in the country include the Nupe and Tiv of central Nigeria; the Edo, Urhobo, and Itsekiri of the Edo and Delta states; the Ijaw of the Rivers state; the Efik and Ibibio of the Cross River State; and the Kanuri of northeastern Nigeria. The Kanuri trace their ancestry back to the ancient Kanem empire, which began during the A.D. 700's.

Languages. English is the official language of Nigeria and is taught in schools throughout the country. However, English is not the country's most commonly used language. Each of Nigeria's ethnic groups has its own distinct language. The three most widely used languages are those of the three largest ethnic groups—Hausa, Yoruba, and Igbo.

A majority of the people of Nigeria speak more than one language. They may use the language of their ethnic group on most occasions and speak English or another language at other times. In addition, Nigerians who are Muslims use Arabic while taking part in various religious activities.

Way of life. About half of Nigeria's people live in rural areas. Most homes in rural Nigeria are made of grass, dried mud, or wood and have roofs of asbestos cement sheets, corrugated metal, or thatch. A typical village consists of several *compounds* (clusters of houses). A group of related families lives in each compound. Well-to-do city dwellers in Nigeria live in modern houses or apartment buildings. The cities also have slums, where people live in mud huts that line unpaved streets. Overcrowding has become a serious problem in many Nigerian cities since the 1960's, when increasing numbers of people began moving from rural to urban areas in search of jobs.

In the cities, many Nigerians wear clothing similar to that worn by North Americans and Europeans. But other city dwellers and most people in rural areas wear traditional clothing. Traditional garments for men and women in Nigeria include long, loose robes made of white or brightly colored fabrics. The men may also wear short, full jackets with shorts or trousers. Small round caps are popular head coverings for men, and Nigerian women often wear scarves tied like turbans.

The chief foods of Nigeria include yams, corn, rice, and beans. The people also eat *plantains* (a kind of banana) and the roots of the cassava plant. Nigerian food is often cooked in palm oil or peanut oil, and it may be highly seasoned with red peppers. Some Nigerian meals feature beef, chicken, fish, or lamb. But in general, most Nigerians eat little meat. Popular beverages in Nigeria include beer and a wine that is made from the sap of palm trees. Some city dwellers also drink coffee and tea. Nigerian Muslims who obey the laws of Islam may not drink alcoholic beverages.

Religion. About half the people of Nigeria are Muslims. They make up the majority of the population in the north. Nearly 40 percent of the people are Christians. They live mainly in southern and central parts of Nigeria. Many Nigerians, especially in the rural areas, practice traditional religions based on the worship of many gods and spirits. People throughout the country may combine Christian or Muslim religious practices with traditional beliefs.

Education. The majority of Nigeria's adults can read and write. Although education is



compulsory for nine years, many Nigerian children do not attend school for this length of time. Many schools lack adequate facilities and well-trained teachers. Nigeria has many universities. The largest include Ahmadu Bello University, in Zaria; the University of Lagos; Lagos State University; and Olabisi Onabanjo University, in Ogun state.

Recreation. People in both urban and rural areas of Nigeria enjoy performances of traditional songs and dances. Motion pictures attract many people in the large cities, where radio and television are also popular. Soccer ranks as the favorite sport in Nigeria. Art festivals and special sports contests are held in many parts of the country.

The arts. Nigeria is famous for the variety and quality of its art. The art of Nigeria and other African countries has also influenced art movements in many other parts of the world. For example, traditional African sculpture influenced Pablo Picasso and other modern Western artists.

The oldest known African sculptures are *terra-cotta* (clay) figures created by the Nok civilization in central Nigeria as early as 500 B.C. (see Nok). Other famous traditional sculptures include the brass figures of Benin and Ife, and the woodcarvings of the Yoruba people. Various peoples who live in the forest areas of Nigeria are known for their elaborately carved wooden masks. Most of the traditional Nigerian painting is done on sculptures and textiles, or as body decoration.

Nigerian music often features drums, xylophones, and various string and wind instruments. Dance and dramatic performances are popular forms of entertainment in Nigeria. Many of these performances portray themes from folk stories or topics related to the everyday life of the people.

Most of Nigeria's traditional literature is oral, rather than written. Popular forms of such literature include chants, folk stories, proverbs, and riddles. During the mid-1900's, many Nigerian authors began to write novels, stories, and poetry. These works were written in English and in local languages. In 1986, Nigerian playwright, poet, and novelist Wole Soyinka became the first African writer to win the Nobel Prize for literature.

The land and climate

Land regions. Nigeria can be divided into 10 land regions. They are: (1) the Sokoto Plains, (2) the Chad Basin, (3) the Northern High Plains, (4) the Jos Plateau, (5) the Niger-Benue River Valley, (6) the Western Uplands, (7) the Eastern Highlands, (8) the Southwestern Plains, (9) the Southeastern Lowlands, and (10) the Niger Delta.

The Sokoto Plains

occupy the northwestern corner of Nigeria. Several rivers flow across the flat, low-lying plains and flood the area during the rainy season. The floodwaters deposit fertile soil that allows farmers to grow various crops in the area. But the floods also occasionally destroy homes and farms.

The Chad Basin

extends across northeastern Nigeria, south and west of Lake Chad. Sandy ridges cut across



parts of the low-lying basin. During the rainy season, parts of the region become swampy. But long dry spells occasionally cause serious droughts in the region. Short grasses and thinly scattered trees grow in the Chad Basin.

The Northern High Plains

cover almost a fifth of Nigeria's total area. They consist largely of flat grasslands, with a few hills and granite ridges. Most of the plains area has an elevation of about 2,500 feet (762 meters) above sea level.

Several branches of the Niger River have their source in the Northern High Plains (see Niger River). These branches include the Gongola, Sokoto, and Kaduna rivers. They flow gently across the plains and form beautiful waterfalls as they tumble into deep gorges in parts of the region.

The Jos Plateau

lies near the center of Nigeria. It rises sharply from the surrounding plains. Parts of the region lie more than 5,000 feet (1,500 meters) above sea level. Dairy cattle graze on the plateau's grasslands, and the area also has important tin mines.

The Niger-Benue River Valley

forms an arc across central Nigeria, from east to west. The Niger River flows southeastward from Benin through west-central Nigeria. The Benue River cuts across east-central Nigeria. The two rivers meet near the center of the country and flow southward to the Niger Delta. Grasslands, palm forests, and swampy plains cover parts of the valley. Other areas are marked by rugged, rocky hills.

The Western Uplands,

also known as the Plateau of Yorubaland, lie about 1,000 to 2,000 feet (300 to 610 meters) above sea level in west-central Nigeria. Dome-shaped granite hills dot the grassy plains of the uplands.

The Eastern Highlands

stretch along the eastern border of Nigeria. They consist of plateaus and low, rocky mountains and hills. Much of the region is more than 4,000 feet (1,200 meters) above sea level. Chappal Waddi, the highest point in Nigeria, rises 7,936 feet (2,419 meters) above sea level in the Gotele Mountains.

The Southwestern Plains

consist of a heavily forested area that slopes gently northward from the Gulf of Guinea, an arm of the Atlantic Ocean. Swamps and lagoons cover much of the coastal region. Lagos, the largest city of Nigeria, occupies several islands in the Lagos Lagoon.

The Southeastern Lowlands

resemble other parts of southern Nigeria, with swamps and forested plains covering much of the region. In the northwestern part of this region, however, steep-sided plateaus rise to about 1,000 feet (300 meters) above sea level.

The Niger Delta

forms the southernmost region of Nigeria, along the Gulf of Guinea. It consists of deposits of clay, mud, and sand at the mouth of the Niger River. Lagoons and mangrove swamps cover



much of the region. This area is also the site of Nigeria's important petroleum deposits.

Climate. Most of Nigeria has a tropical climate, with warm temperatures throughout the year. The north is generally hotter and drier than the south. The average annual temperature in the north is about 85 F (29 C), but daily temperatures may rise above 100 F (38 C). The average annual temperature in the south is about 80 F (27 C).

Southern Nigeria receives far more rainfall than the northern part of the country. The coastal areas of Nigeria have an average annual rainfall of about 150 inches (381 centimeters). Parts of the north receive only about 25 inches (64 centimeters) of rainfall annually. The rainy season lasts from April to October in most parts of Nigeria, though it usually extends for a longer time in the south.

Economy

Nigeria has a developing economy based on agriculture and mining. Agriculture employs about three-fifths of all Nigerian workers, and it accounts for about one-third of the country's *gross domestic product* (GDP). The GDP is the total value of goods and services produced within a country in a year. Since the late 1960's, the development of the oil industry has made mining the fastest-growing part of the economy. Today, mining accounts for about one-third of the country's GDP. Revenue from oil exports provides the government with its chief source of income. Despite the increase in oil income, Nigeria has a high poverty rate.

Natural resources. Nigeria has a variety of natural resources. Much of Nigeria's land is suitable for farming and grazing. However, only a small percentage of the country's total area is used for growing crops. Forests also cover much of Nigeria. Lakes, rivers, and streams provide an abundance of fish.

Petroleum ranks as Nigeria's most valuable natural resource. Large oil fields lie in southwestern Nigeria and offshore in the Gulf of Guinea. The Jos Plateau of central Nigeria has important deposits of tin and columbite, a mineral that is used in the production of certain kinds of steel. Other important natural resources include coal, iron ore, lead, limestone, natural gas, and zinc.

Agriculture. Nigerian farmers grow crops throughout the country. Nigeria is the world's leading producer of cassava and yams. The country ranks among the world's leading producers of cacao, palm oil and palm kernels, and peanuts. Nigeria's other important crops include cashews, corn, millet, rice, rubber, and sorghum. Farmers raise cattle, chickens, goats, and sheep. Nigerian fishing crews catch catfish, shrimp, tilapia, and a variety of other seafoods.

Nigeria does not grow enough food for its own population, and it must import much of its food. Most of the country's farmers use old-fashioned tools and methods. The government sponsors programs to distribute fertilizer, insecticides, and new varieties of seeds to farmers.

Mining. Nigeria ranks as one of the world's leading producers and exporters of petroleum. Foreign oil companies operate most of the petroleum wells, but they pay the Nigerian government much of their profits. In addition to petroleum, Nigeria produces coal, columbite,



gold, iron ore, lead, limestone, natural gas, tin, and zinc.

Manufacturing. Nigeria's factories produce a wide variety of goods. However, manufacturing employs only about 2 percent of the country's work force. Manufacturing also only accounts for about 2 percent of Nigeria's GDP. Most businesses and industries are privately owned, but the federal government shares in the ownership of some. Leading industries in Nigeria produce cement, chemicals, fertilizers, food products, footwear, textiles, and tires. The country also has motor vehicle assembly plants, petroleum refineries, and steel mills.

International trade. Petroleum accounts for more than 90 percent of the total value of Nigeria's exports. Nigeria belongs to the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), an association of countries whose economies depend heavily on oil exports. Because of the large oil exports, Nigeria exports more than it imports. In addition to oil, Nigeria exports cacao beans, natural gas, and rubber. Chief imports include chemical products, electronics, food products, machinery, petroleum products, and transportation equipment. Nigeria's most important trade partners are Brazil, China, France, Germany, India, South Korea, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

Transportation and communication. Railroads and paved roads link Nigeria's major cities. But many of the country's roads are unpaved and rutted. Few Nigerians own an automobile. Buses and taxis—often jammed with passengers—operate along the main roads. Nigeria's chief ports are Lagos and Port Harcourt. Bonny has Nigeria's main port for petroleum shipments. Abuja, Kano, Lagos, and Port Harcourt have international airports.

A number of daily newspapers, representing a variety of political opinions, are published in Nigeria. These newspapers are both privately and government owned. The national and state governments operate radio and television systems that broadcast in more than a dozen languages. The country also has several private radio and television stations.

History

People lived in what is now Nigeria thousands of years ago. In parts of Nigeria, archaeologists have found stone tools that are 40,000 years old. Human skeletons, rock paintings, and other remains of prehistoric settlements have also been found.

The Nok civilization flourished in what is now central Nigeria from about 500 B.C. to A.D. 200. The clay figures of animals and people produced by this civilization are among the oldest known examples of African sculpture.

Early kingdoms. The kingdom of Kanem developed in about the A.D. 700's in what is now Chad (see Kanem). Beginning in the 1000's, Kanem adopted Islam as its religion and gradually expanded its territory. By the 1300's, Bornu (now called Borno), in what is now northeastern Nigeria, had become the political center of the kingdom. The Kanem-Bornu kingdom traded with countries in Africa, Asia, and Europe.

After about A.D. 1000, a number of Hausa states grew up in the region west of Bornu. Some of these states, such as Kano and Katsina, traded with other countries in North Africa and the Middle East. Kano, Kebbi, and some other Hausa states became part of the Songhai Empire, a west African state that flourished during the 1400's and 1500's. During the early



1800's, Usman dan Fodio (also called Uthman ibn Fudi), a Fulani who was a Muslim religious leader, declared war on the Hausa states. His forces gained control of almost all northern Nigeria except Bornu. He turned the area into a Muslim empire called the Sokoto Caliphate.

In the south, the Yoruba people had established an important cultural center at Ife as early as the mid-900's. Yoruba rulers from Ife later founded states in various parts of the surrounding territory. The most important of these was the kingdom of Oyo, which extended into what is now the country of Benin during the 1700's.

The kingdom of Benin flourished from the early 1400's to the 1800's. It developed between Lagos and the Niger Delta and grew into a prosperous trade center. The kingdom also became famous for its sculptures of brass, bronze, and ivory.

The coming of the Europeans. The Portuguese were the first Europeans to reach Nigeria. They established a trade center near Benin in the late 1400's and developed a trade in slaves with the African leaders. British, Dutch, and other European traders later competed for control of the trade. By the 1700's, the British were the leading slave traders on the Nigerian coast.

In 1807, the British government outlawed the slave trade. The United Kingdom signed treaties with other European countries and with local African rulers in an attempt to end the trade. British ships sailed along the Nigerian coast and captured ships that carried slaves. The British then set the slaves free at Freetown in Sierra Leone. British missionaries converted many of the freed slaves to Christianity. Some of the freed slaves later returned to Nigeria and helped spread Christianity along the coastal areas and in the southwest.

British rule. After 1807, British traders began to deal in palm oil and other agricultural products of the Nigerian coastal region. They explored the Niger River and other waterways in search of valuable natural resources. In 1851, the United Kingdom seized the port of Lagos to increase its influence over the area. Lagos served as a base from which the British continued their war against the slave trade. Lagos became a British colony in 1861.

During the late 1800's, the United Kingdom established protectorates in parts of southern Nigeria. A British trading firm called the Royal Niger Company ruled most of northern Nigeria until 1900. That year, the British government made the region the Protectorate of Northern Nigeria. In 1906, all of southern Nigeria, including Lagos, became the Colony and Protectorate of Southern Nigeria. Nigerians in many areas, especially in the north, fought unsuccessfully against the establishment of British rule. In 1914, the United Kingdom joined the northern and southern regions into one unit—the Colony and Protectorate of Nigeria.

Independence. During the 1920's, Nigerians began to demand representation in the British colonial government. In the 1940's, their demands began to be met.

In 1946, the United Kingdom divided Nigeria into three regions—north, west, and east. Each region had an assembly composed of Nigerian and British members. The assemblies acted as advisory bodies to the central government in Lagos. A Constitution adopted in 1954 gave the assemblies increased powers and established Nigeria as a federation. Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, a northern leader, became the federation's first prime minister in 1957. On Oct. 1,



1960, the United Kingdom granted Nigeria independence. Balewa remained prime minister. Nnamdi Azikiwe, a political leader from the eastern part, became the first person to hold the ceremonial office of president of Nigeria.

In 1961, the United Nations (UN) organized a referendum in British Cameroons, a UN trust territory between Nigeria and Cameroon that had been governed by the United Kingdom (see British Cameroons). As a result of the referendum, the northern part of the territory joined Nigeria, and the southern part joined Cameroon, which borders Nigeria on the east.

During the early 1960's, various ethnic groups competed for political power within Nigeria's three regions. In 1963, a Mid-Western Region was created out of the Western Region. Some people in the Northern and Eastern regions also demanded separate political units.

At the same time, the different groups competed for control of the central government. The people of southern Nigeria, especially the Igbo, resented the power of the Hausa people of the north. The northerners controlled the central government because the north had more people than the other regions. Censuses conducted in 1962 and 1963 showed that the north had an even larger population than had been expected. Many southerners protested against the census figures. Charges of dishonesty in a 1964 federal election and a 1965 regional election led to violent riots and added to the turmoil.

Civil War. In January 1966, a group of Army officers, mainly Igbo, overthrew the central and regional governments. They killed Prime Minister Balewa and the prime ministers of the Northern and Western regions. General Johnson Aguiyi-Ironsi, commander of the Army and an Igbo, took control of the government. In May, he abolished the federal system of government. He set up a strong central government and appointed many Igbo as advisers. Many northerners feared that these actions would give the Igbo control over the nation. Riots broke out in the north, and thousands of Igbo were killed.

In July 1966, a group of northern Army officers revolted against the government and killed Aguiyi-Ironsi. Yakubu Gowon, the Army chief of staff, became head of a new military government. But Colonel Odumegwu Ojukwu, the military governor of the Eastern Region, refused to accept Gowon as head of state.

In 1967, Gowon replaced the country's 4 political regions with 12 states to give some of the smaller ethnic groups more political power. Ojukwu refused to accept the division of the Eastern Region into 3 states. On May 30, 1967, he declared the Eastern Region an independent republic called Biafra. Civil war between Biafra and the rest of Nigeria broke out in June 1967. Biafra surrendered in January 1970.

The civil war caused widespread death and destruction in southeastern Nigeria. Beginning in 1970, the government sponsored reconstruction and relief programs to overcome the effects of the war. Many Igbo, including some who had fought with rebel forces, were given government positions.

Oil wealth. During the early 1970's, Nigeria's growing oil industry provided the country with an important source of wealth. Oil profits enabled the government to plan development programs to improve the standard of living of all Nigerians. Major goals included the establishment of manufacturing industries, new schools, and improved transportation



facilities. But political problems continued in Nigeria. In 1975, military leaders overthrew General Gowon. General Murtala Ramat Muhammad became head of state and commander in chief of Nigeria's armed forces. In 1976, a group of military officers tried to overthrow the government. They failed, but killed General Muhammad. Lieutenant General Olusegun Obasanjo succeeded him (see Obasanjo, Olusegun). Also in 1976, Nigeria increased its number of states from 12 to 19. Military rule ended in 1979. The people elected a new civilian government to replace the military government. Shehu Shagari became president. He was reelected in 1983.

The wealth that Nigeria gained from its oil exports in the 1970's attracted many people from neighboring lands. These people came to Nigeria to find work. But in the early 1980's, declining oil prices began to hurt Nigeria's economy. In 1983 and again in 1985, the government ordered foreigners who were living in Nigeria illegally to leave the country. Many people from Ghana and other countries were required to leave Nigeria.

In 1980, the Nigerian government began building a new city called Abuja near the center of the country to replace Lagos as the capital. Abuja became the official capital in 1991.

Changes in government. In December 1983, the military overthrew the civilian government. Major General Muhammadu Buhari became head of a new military government. In 1985, he was overthrown by other military leaders. Major General Ibrahim Badamosi Babangida became head of the government. He announced that Nigeria would return to civilian rule. The government formed two political parties in 1989. Elections for a new National Assembly took place in 1992. Elections for a civilian president were held in June 1993. But Babangida canceled the presidential election results, charging that the voting had been dishonest. Many Nigerians rioted in protest.

In November 1993, General Sani Abacha overthrew the Interim National Government that Babangida had established in the summer. That government was headed by a civilian named Earnest Shonekan. Abacha declared himself head of state and commander in chief of the armed forces. He dissolved the National Assembly, outlawed political parties, and dismissed all elected officials of Nigeria's local governments. In 1995, he ended the ban on political parties. In 1996, Nigeria increased the number of its states to 36. See Abacha, Sani.

Abacha died in June 1998. He was succeeded as president by General Abdulsalami Abubakar (see Abubakar, Abdulsalami). In 1999, Nigeria held elections for the National Assembly and for the presidency and adopted a new constitution. Olusegun Obasanjo, who as a military ruler had handed over power to a democratically elected government in 1979, was elected president as a civilian. Obasanjo was reelected in 2003, though opposition parties and some independent observers questioned whether the election was fair.

Recent developments. Decades of oil spills have severely damaged parts of the Niger Delta, contaminating land and water. In 2011, the Dutch oil company Shell accepted blame for much of the damage. Shell stopped operating in the area in 1993, but its remaining pipelines and other facilities continue to cause pollution. A UN report estimated it would take 25 to 30 years to restore the environment.



Beginning in 1999, ethnic, religious, and political tensions in Nigeria sparked outbreaks of violence, leaving tens of thousands of people dead. Many conflicts have been over access to land or other scarce resources. The adoption of the *Shari`ah* (Islamic law), also spelled Sharia or Shari`a, in several northern Nigerian states has led to clashes between Muslims and Christians. Boko Haram, a terrorist organization that supports Muslim extremists, has killed thousands of people since openly rebelling against the Nigerian government in 2009.

In April 2007, Umaru Yar'Adua, governor of the northern state of Katsina, was elected president. He died in May 2010 after a long illness. Vice President Goodluck Jonathan succeeded him and then won the 2011 presidential election. Northern Muslims protested the results, leading to riots that killed about 800 people. Despite the violence, observers called the election free and fair.

Early in 2015, Nigeria joined a military coalition with Benin, Cameroon, Chad, and Niger against Boko Haram, whose attacks had intensified and crossed Nigeria's borders. At the end of March, Nigerian voters elected former military dictator Muhammadu Buhari as the nation's next president. Buhari took office at the end of May.

Contributor:

- Ebere Onwudiwe, Ph.D., Executive Director, Center for African Studies, Central State University.

How to cite this article:

To cite this article, World Book recommends the following format:

MLA:

Onwudiwe, Ebere. "Nigeria." *World Book Student*. World Book, 2016. Web. 16 May 2016.

APA:

Onwudiwe, E. (2016). Nigeria. In *World Book student*. Retrieved from <http://www.worldbookonline.com.gatekeeper.chipublib.org/student/article?id=ar391300>

Harvard:

Onwudiwe, E 2016, 'Nigeria' , *World Book Student*, World Book, Chicago, viewed 16 May 2016, <<http://www.worldbookonline.com.gatekeeper.chipublib.org/student/article?id=ar391300>>.

